

Bob Woodward

Robert Upshur Woodward (born March 26, 1943) is an American investigative journalist and non-fiction author. He has worked for *The Washington Post* since 1971 as a reporter and is now^[1] an associate editor there.

While a young reporter for *The Washington Post* in 1972, Woodward was teamed up with Carl Bernstein; the two did much of the original news reporting on the Watergate scandal. These scandals led to numerous government investigations and the eventual resignation of President Richard Nixon. The work of Woodward and Bernstein was called "maybe the single greatest reporting effort of all time" by longtime journalism figure Gene Roberts.^[2]

Woodward continued to work for *The Washington Post* after his reporting on Watergate. He has since written 18 books on American politics, 12 of which topped best-seller lists.

Contents

Early life and career

Career recognition and awards

Career

- Watergate
- George W. Bush administration
 - Involvement in the Plame scandal
- Other professional activities
- Sequester dispute with Obama administration

Criticism

- Criticisms of style
- Criticisms of content

Lecture circuit

Personal life

In popular culture

Books

Television

Bob Woodward



Born	Robert Upshur Woodward <div>March 26, 1943</div> <div>Geneva, Illinois, U.S.</div>
Education	Yale University (BA) <div>George Washington University</div>
Occupation	Journalist
Notable credit(s)	<i>The Washington Post</i>

- References
- External links

Early life and career

Woodward was born in Geneva, Illinois, the son of Jane (née Upshur) and Alfred Eno Woodward II, chief judge of the 18th Judicial Circuit Court. He was a resident of Wheaton, Illinois. He enrolled in Yale College with a Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) scholarship and studied history and English literature. During his service in the Navy, Woodward served aboard the USS Wright, and was one of two officers necessary to move or handle nuclear launch codes the *Wright* carried in its capacity as a NECPA.^[3] While at Yale, Woodward joined the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity and was a member of the prestigious secret society Book and Snake.^{[4][5]} He received his B.A. degree in 1965 and began a five-year tour of duty in the United States Navy. At one time, he was close to Admiral Robert O. Welander, being communications officer on the USS Fox under Welander's command.^[6]

After being discharged as a lieutenant in August 1970, Woodward was admitted to Harvard Law School but elected not to attend. Instead, he applied for a job as a reporter for The Washington Post while taking graduate courses in Shakespeare and international relations at George Washington University. Harry M. Rosenfeld, the *Post's* metropolitan editor, gave him a two-week trial but did not hire him because of his lack of journalistic experience. After a year at the Montgomery Sentinel, a weekly newspaper in the Washington, D.C., suburbs, Woodward was hired as a *Post* reporter in 1971.^[7]

Career recognition and awards

Although not a recipient in his own right, Woodward made crucial contributions to two Pulitzer Prizes won by *The Washington Post*. First, he and Bernstein were the lead reporters on Watergate and the *Post* won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1973.^[8] He was also the main reporter for the *Post's* coverage of the September 11 attacks in 2001. The *Post* won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for 10 of its stories on the subject.^[9]

Woodward himself has been a recipient of nearly every major American journalism award, including the Heywood Broun award (1972), Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Reporting (1972 and 1986), Sigma Delta Chi Award (1973), George Polk Award (1972), William Allen White Medal (2000), and the Gerald R. Ford Prize for Reporting on the Presidency (2002). In 2012, Colby College presented Woodward with the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award for courageous journalism as well as an honorary doctorate.^[10]

Woodward has authored or co-authored 18 nonfiction books in the past 35 years. All 18 have been national bestsellers and 12 of them have been No. 1 national nonfiction bestsellers—more No. 1 national nonfiction bestsellers than any contemporary author.

In his 1995 memoir, *A Good Life*, former *Post* Executive Editor Ben Bradlee singled out Woodward in the foreword. "It would be hard to overestimate the contributions to my newspaper and to my time as editor of that extraordinary reporter, Bob Woodward—surely the best of his generation at investigative reporting, the best I've ever seen.... And Woodward has maintained the same position on top of journalism's ladder ever since Watergate."^[11]

Spouse(s)	Kathleen Middlekauff (1966–1969) Frances Kuper (1974–1979) Elsa Walsh (1989–present)
Children	2
Website	bobwoodward.com (http://bobwoodward.com)

David Gergen, who had worked in the White House during the Richard Nixon and three subsequent administrations, said in his 2000 memoir, *Eyewitness to Power*, of Woodward's reporting, "I don't accept everything he writes as gospel—he can get details wrong—but generally, his accounts in both his books and in the Post are remarkably reliable and demand serious attention. I am convinced he writes only what he believes to be true or has been reliably told to be true. And he is certainly a force for keeping the government honest."^[12]

In 2001, Woodward won the Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Journalism.^[13]

Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard* called Woodward "the best pure reporter of his generation, perhaps ever."^[14] In 2003, Albert Hunt of *The Wall Street Journal* called Woodward "the most celebrated journalist of our age." In 2004, Bob Schieffer of CBS News said, "Woodward has established himself as the best reporter of our time. He may be the best reporter of all time."^[15]

In 2014, Robert Gates former director of the CIA and Secretary of Defense, said that he wished he'd recruited Woodward into the CIA, saying, "He has an extraordinary ability to get otherwise responsible adults to spill [their] guts to him...his ability to get people to talk about stuff they shouldn't be talking about is just extraordinary and may be unique."^[16]

Career

Watergate

Woodward and Carl Bernstein were both assigned to report on the June 17, 1972, burglary of the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in a Washington, D.C., office building called Watergate. Their work, under editor Ben Bradlee, became known for being the first to report on a number of political "dirty tricks" used by the Nixon re-election committee during his campaign for re-election. Their book about the scandal, *All the President's Men*, became a No. 1 bestseller and was later turned into a movie. The 1976 film, starring Robert Redford as Woodward and Dustin Hoffman as Bernstein, transformed the reporters into celebrities and inspired a wave of interest in investigative journalism.

The book and movie also led to the enduring mystery of the identity of Woodward's secret Watergate informant known as Deep Throat, a reference to the title of a popular pornographic movie at the time. Woodward said he would protect Deep Throat's identity until the man died or allowed his name to be revealed. For more than 30 years, only Woodward, Bernstein, and a handful of others knew the informant's identity until it was claimed by his family to *Vanity Fair* magazine to be former Federal Bureau of Investigation Associate Director W. Mark Felt in May 2005. Woodward immediately confirmed the veracity of this claim and subsequently published a book, titled *The Secret Man*, that detailed his relationship with Felt.

Woodward and Bernstein followed up with a second book on Watergate, entitled *The Final Days* (Simon and Schuster 1976), covering in extensive depth the period from November 1973 until President Nixon resigned in August 1974.



Woodward at the LBJ Library in 2016

The Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/woodstein/>) are housed at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

George W. Bush administration

Woodward spent more time than any other journalist with former President George W. Bush, interviewing him six times for close to 11 hours total.^[17] Woodward's four books, *Bush at War* (2002), *Plan of Attack* (2004), *State of Denial* (2006), and *The War Within: A Secret White House History (2006–2008)* (2008) are detailed accounts of the Bush presidency, including the response to the September 11 attacks and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In a series of articles published in January 2002, he and Dan Balz described the events at Camp David in the aftermath of September 11 and discussed the Worldwide Attack Matrix.

Woodward believed the Bush administration's claims of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction prior to the war. During an appearance on Larry King Live, he was asked by a telephone caller, "Suppose we go to war and go into Iraq and there are no weapons of mass destruction", Woodward responded "I think the chance of that happening is about zero. There's just too much there."^{[18][19]} Woodward later admitted his error saying, "I think I dropped the ball here. I should have pushed much, much harder on the skepticism about the reality of WMD; in other words, [I should have] said, 'Hey, look, the evidence is not as strong as they were claiming.'"^[20]

In 2008, as a part of the Google Talks series, Woodward, who was interviewed by Google CEO Eric Schmidt, said that he had a fourth book in his Bush at War series in the making. He then added jokingly that his wife told him that she would kill him if he decides to write a fifth in the series.^[21]

Involvement in the Plame scandal

On November 14, 2005, Woodward gave a two-hour deposition to Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald. He testified that a senior administration official told him in June 2003 that Iraq war critic Joe Wilson's wife (later identified as Valerie Plame), worked for the CIA as a WMD analyst, not as an undercover operative.^[22] Woodward appears to have been the first reporter to learn about her employment (albeit not her name) from a government source. The deposition was reported in *The Washington Post* on November 16, 2005, and was the first time Woodward revealed publicly that he had any special knowledge about the case. Woodward testified the information was given to him in a "casual" and "offhand" manner, and said that he does not believe it was part of any coordinated effort to "out" Plame as a CIA employee.^[23] Later, Woodward's source identified himself. It was Richard Armitage, Colin Powell's deputy and an internal critic of the Iraq War and the White House inner circle.

Woodward said the revelation came at the end of a long, confidential background interview for his 2004 book *Plan of Attack*. He did not reveal the official's disclosure at the time because it did not strike him as important. Later, he kept it to himself because it came as part of a confidential conversation with a source.

In his deposition, Woodward also said that he had conversations with Scooter Libby after the June 2003 conversation with his confidential administration source, and testified that it is possible that he might have asked Libby further questions about Joe Wilson's wife before her employment at the CIA and her identity were publicly known.

Woodward apologized to Leonard Downie Jr., editor of *The Washington Post*, for not informing him earlier of the June 2003 conversation. Downie accepted the apology and said even had the paper known it would not have changed its reporting.

New York University professor Jay Rosen severely criticized Woodward for allegedly being co-opted by the Bush White House and also for not telling the truth about his role in the Plame affair, writing: "Not only is Woodward not in the hunt, but he is slowly turning into the hunted. Part of what remains to be uncovered is how Woodward was played by the Bush team, and what they thought they were doing by leaking to him, as well as what he did with the dubious information he got."^[24]

Other professional activities

Woodward has continued to write books and report stories for *The Washington Post*, and serves as an associate editor at the paper. He focuses on the presidency, intelligence, and Washington institutions such as the U.S. Supreme Court, The Pentagon, and the Federal Reserve. He also wrote the book *Wired*, about the Hollywood drug culture and the death of comic John Belushi.

In 2018, Woodward announced participation in an online class on investigative journalism.^[25]

Sequester dispute with Obama administration

On February 22, 2013, shortly before the United States federal budget sequester took effect, *The Washington Post* published a column by Woodward in which he criticized the Obama administration for their statements in 2012 and 2013 that the sequester had been proposed by Republicans in Congress; Woodward said his research showed that the sequester proposal had originated with the White House.^{[26][27]} Press Secretary Jay Carney confirmed, "The sequester was something that was discussed, and as has been reported, it was an idea that the White House put forward."^[28]

On February 27, Woodward told *Politico* that before the column was published, Woodward had called a senior White House official, later identified by reporters as economic adviser Gene Sperling, to discuss the piece, and that the official had "yelled at [Woodward] for about a half-hour" before sending him a page-long email that included the sentence, "I think you will regret staking out that claim." In *Politico*'s reporting, Woodward's focus on that line was described as "making clear he saw [that sentence] as a veiled threat", although Woodward did not use the word "threat" or "threatened".^[29] Several other sources also indicated that Woodward had expressed the line as an intended threat.^{[30][31][32]}

The next day, *Politico* published the complete email exchange between Woodward and Sperling. Sperling's statements leading up to the "regret" line read: "But I do truly believe you should rethink your comment about saying that Potus asking for revenues is moving the goal post. I know you may not believe this, but as a friend, I think you will regret staking out that claim."^[33] The White House subsequently released a statement that "of course no threat was intended...The note suggested that Mr. Woodward would regret the observation he made regarding the sequester because that observation was inaccurate, nothing more."^[34] Upon release of the emails, several conservative commentators indicated they no longer agreed with characterizing the "regret" statement as a threat.^[35]

In a February 28 Fox News Channel interview, Woodward said he had never used the word "threat" but said Sperling's conduct was "not the way to operate in a White House". He also said: "I've been flooded with emails from people in the press saying this is exactly the way the White House works, they are trying to control and they don't want to be challenged or crossed".^[36] National Journal editor Ron Fournier, conservative *Washington Post* columnist Jennifer Rubin, and Fox News contributor and former Clinton adviser Lanny Davis expressed support for Woodward; Fournier and Davis described similar experiences with Obama administration officials.^{[37][38][39]}

Criticism

Criticisms of style

Woodward often uses unnamed sources in his reporting for the *Post* and in his books. Using extensive interviews with firsthand witnesses, documents, meeting notes, diaries, calendars, and other documentation, Woodward attempts to construct a seamless narrative of events, most often told through the eyes of the key participants.

Nicholas von Hoffman has made the criticism that "arrestingly irrelevant detail is [often] used",^[40] while Michael Massing believes Woodward's books are "filled with long, at times tedious passages with no evident direction."^[41]

Joan Didion has leveled the most comprehensive criticism of Woodward, in a lengthy September 1996 essay in *The New York Review of Books*.^[42] Though "Woodward is a widely trusted reporter, even an American icon", she says that he assembles reams of often irrelevant detail, fails to draw conclusions, and make judgments. "Measurable cerebral activity is virtually absent" from his books after Watergate from 1979 to 1996, she said. She said the books are notable for "a scrupulous passivity, an agreement to cover the story not as it is occurring but as it is presented, which is to say as it is manufactured." She ridicules "fairness" as "a familiar newsroom piety, the excuse in practice for a good deal of autopilot reporting and lazy thinking." All this focus on what people said and thought—their "decent intentions"—circumscribes "possible discussion or speculation", resulting in what she called "political pornography".

The Post's Richard Harwood defended Woodward in a September 6, 1996, column, arguing that Woodward's method is that of a reporter—"talking to people you write about, checking and cross-checking their versions of contemporary history," and collecting documentary evidence in notes, letters, and records."^[43]

Criticisms of content

- Woodward has been accused of exaggeration and fabrication regarding "Deep Throat," his Watergate informant. Even since W. Mark Felt was announced as the true identity behind Deep Throat, John Dean^[44] and Ed Gray,^[45] in separate publications, have used Woodward's book *All The President's Men* and his published notes on his meetings with Deep Throat to argue that Deep Throat could not have been only Mark Felt. They argued that Deep Throat was a fictional composite made up of several Woodward sources, only one of whom was Felt. Gray, in his book *In Nixon's Web*, even went so far as to publish an e-mail and telephone exchange he had with Donald Santarelli, a Washington lawyer who was a Justice Department official during Watergate, in which Santarelli confirmed to Gray that he was the source behind statements Woodward recorded in notes he has attributed to Deep Throat.^[46] However, Stephen Mielke, an archivist at the University of Texas who oversees the Woodward-Bernstein papers (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/woodstein/>), said it is likely the page was misfiled under Felt because no source was identified. The original page of notes is in the Mark Felt file but "the carbon is located with the handwritten and typed notes attributed to Santarelli." Ed Gray said that Santarelli confirmed to him that he was the source behind the statements in the

notes.^[47]

- J. Bradford DeLong has noticed strong inconsistencies between the accounts of the making of Clinton economic policy described both in Woodward's book *Maestro* and his book *The Agenda*.^[48]
- Some of Woodward's critics accuse him of abandoning critical inquiry to maintain his access to high-profile political actors. Anthony Lewis called the style "a trade in which the great grant access in return for glory."^[49] Christopher Hitchens accused Woodward of acting as "stenographer to the rich and powerful."^[50]
- Writer Tanner Colby, who co-wrote a biography of John Belushi with the late actor's widow Judy, wrote in *Slate* that, while Woodward's frequently criticized 1984 book *Wired: The Short Life and Fast Times of John Belushi* is largely accurate in its description of events, Woodward either gets the context wrong or doesn't find any context at all. For example, Belushi's grandmother's funeral, which led him to make a serious effort to sober up, gets merely a paragraph in Woodward's retelling, while a 24-hour drug binge in Los Angeles goes on for eight pages simply because the limo driver was willing to talk to Woodward. "It's like someone wrote a biography of Michael Jordan in which all the stats and scores are correct, but you come away with the impression that Michael Jordan wasn't very good at playing basketball," he concluded. Because it was unique among Woodward's books in that it made no use of confidential or anonymous sources, Colby was able to interview many of the same sources that Woodward had used, making comparisons of their recollection of events to Woodward's accounting of them relatively easy.^[51]
- Woodward believed the Bush administration's claims of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction prior to the war, and the publication of the book *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* by former Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet led Woodward to engage in a rather tortuous account of the extent of his pre-war conversations with Tenet in an article in *The New Yorker* in which he also chastised *New York Times* op-ed columnist Maureen Dowd for being critical of him.^[52]
- Woodward was also accused of fabricating a deathbed interview with CIA Director William Casey, as described in *Veil*. Critics say the interview simply could not have taken place as written in the book.^{[53][54][55][56]} Robert M. Gates, Casey's deputy at the time, in his book "From the Shadows", recounts speaking with Casey during this exact period. Gates directly quotes Casey saying 22 words, even more than the 19 words Woodward said Casey used with him.^[57] The CIA's internal report found that Casey "had forty-three meetings or phone calls with Woodward, including a number of meetings at Casey's home with no one else present" during the period Woodward was researching his book.^[58] Gates was also quoted saying, "When I saw him in the hospital, his speech was even more slurred than usual, but if you knew him well, you could make out a few words, enough to get sense of what he was saying."^[59] Following Casey's death, President Ronald Reagan wrote: "[Woodward]'s a liar and he lied about what Casey is supposed to have thought of me."^[60]

Commentator David Frum has said, perhaps partly tongue-in-cheek, that Washington officials can learn something about the way Washington works from Woodward's books: "From his books, you can draw a composite profile of the powerful Washington player. That person is highly circumspect, highly risk averse, eschews new ideas, flatters his colleagues to their face (while trashing them to Woodward behind their backs), and is always careful to avoid career-threatening confrontation. We all admire heroes, but Woodward's books teach us that those who rise to leadership are precisely those who take care to abjure heroism for themselves."^[61]

Despite these criticisms and challenges, Woodward has been praised as an authoritative and balanced journalist. *The New York Times Book Review* said in 2004 that "No reporter has more talent for getting Washington's inside story and telling it cogently."^[62]

Lecture circuit

Bob Woodward regularly gives speeches on the "lecture circuit" to industry lobbying groups, such as the American Bankruptcy Institute, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, and the Mortgage Bankers Association.^[63] Woodward commands speaking fees "rang[ing] from \$15,000 to \$60,000" and donates them to his personal foundation, the Woodward Walsh Foundation, which donates to charities including Sidwell Friends School.^[64] *Washington Post* policy prohibits "speaking engagements without permission from department heads" but Woodward insists that the policy is "fuzzy and ambiguous".^[65]

Woodward also frequently lectures at colleges and universities. He gave the 2001 [Robert C. Vance Distinguished Lecture](#) at [Central Connecticut State University](#),^[66] and has spoken at the [University of Arkansas](#),^[67] [University of Alabama](#),^[68] [Eastern Connecticut State University](#),^[69] [West Texas A&M University](#)^[70], and [Oklahoma City Community College](#)^[71].

Personal life

Woodward now lives in the [Georgetown](#) section of Washington, D.C. He has been married three times. His first marriage (1966–1969) was to his high school sweetheart [Kathleen Middlekauff](#), now an English professor. His second marriage (1974–1979) was to Frances Kuper.^[72] In 1989, he married for a third time to Elsa Walsh (b. August 25, 1957), a writer for *The New Yorker* and the author of *Divided Lives: The Public and Private Struggles of Three American Women*.^[73] He has two daughters - Taliesin (born 1976) and Diana (born 1996).

In popular culture

Woodward was portrayed by [Robert Redford](#) in *All the President's Men* (1976), [J. T. Walsh](#) in *Wired* (1989), and [Julian Morris](#) in *Mark Felt: The Man Who Brought Down the White House* (2017).

Books

Woodward has co-authored or authored twelve No. 1 national bestselling non-fiction books. They are:

- All the President's Men*—about the Watergate scandal; (1974) [ISBN 0-671-21781-X](#), 25th Anniversary issue in (1999) [ISBN 0-684-86355-3](#); written with [Carl Bernstein](#)
- The Final Days*—about Nixon's resignation; (1976) [ISBN 0-671-22298-8](#); written with [Carl Bernstein](#)
- The Brethren*—about the Supreme Court in the Warren E. Burger years; (1979) [ISBN 0-671-24110-9](#); written with [Scott Armstrong](#)
- Wired*—on the death of [John Belushi](#) and the Hollywood drug culture; (1984) [ISBN 0-671-47320-4](#)
- Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA*—about the CIA's "secret wars" during the reign of [William J. Casey](#); (1987) [ISBN 0-671-60117-2](#)
- The Commanders*—on The Pentagon, the first Bush administration and the Gulf War; (1991) [ISBN 0-671-41367-8](#)
- The Agenda*—about Bill Clinton's first term; (1994) [ISBN 0-7432-7407-5](#)
- Shadow*—on the legacy of Watergate and the scandals that faced later Presidential administrations; (1999) [ISBN 0-684-85262-4](#)
- Bush at War*—about the path to war with Afghanistan following September 11; (2002) [ISBN 0-7432-0473-5](#)
- Plan of Attack*—about how and why President [George W. Bush](#) decided to go to war with Iraq; (2004) [ISBN 0-7432-5547-X](#)
- State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III*—which revealed some interesting information about the Bush administration and the War in Iraq. Highly controversial, it appeared on the *Today* show just before its release; (2006) [ISBN 0-7432-7223-4](#)
- Obama's Wars*—about the Obama administration's handling of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; Simon & Schuster, (September 2010). [ISBN 978-1-4391-7249-0](#)

Other books, which have also been bestsellers but not No. 1, are

- The Choice*—about [Bill Clinton](#)'s re-election bid; (1996) [ISBN 0-684-81308-4](#)

- *Maestro*—about Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan; (2000) ISBN 0-7432-0412-3
- *The Secret Man*—about Mark Felt's disclosure, after more than 30 years, that he was Deep Throat. The book was written before Felt admitted his title, as he was sickly and Woodward expected that some way or another, it would come out; (2005) ISBN 0-7432-8715-0
- *The War Within: A Secret White House History (2006–2008)*—(2008) ISBN 1-4165-5897-7
- *The Price of Politics* - about President Obama and congressional Republican and Democratic leaders' attempt to restore the American economy and improve the federal government's fiscal condition over 3.5 years; (2012) ISBN 978-1451651119
- *The Last of the President's Men* - about Alexander Butterfield, the Nixon aide who disclosed the secret White House taping system that changed history and led to Nixon's resignation. (2015) ISBN 978-1501116445

Newsweek has excerpted five of Woodward's books in cover stories; *60 Minutes* has done segments on five; and three have been made into movies.

Television

Woodward co-wrote the 1986 NBC made-for-TV film *Under Siege* about a series of terrorist attacks in the United States.^{[74][75]} The film's other co-writers include Christian Williams, Richard Harwood, and Alfred Sole.

Woodward again collaborated with Williams when they were story writers for the 1989 TNT TV miniseries adaptation of *The Nightmare Years* about American journalist William L. Shirer stationed in pre-WWII Nazi Germany.^[76] The miniseries' screenplay was written by Ian Curteis.

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External links

- [Official personal website](http://www.bobwoodward.com/) (<http://www.bobwoodward.com/>)
 - [Bob Woodward](https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/bob-woodward) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/bob-woodward>) at *The Washington Post*
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